C.11 Visual Resources

The Visual Resources section describes the scenic and aesthetic impacts to the landscape that are associated with the construction and operation of the Project or alternatives. Situated in northeastern Los Angeles County, the Project would construct a grade control structure and remove sediment from the Littlerock Reservoir annually. The study area for the visual resource analysis was defined by view-points located within the Reservoir's public recreational areas and from public view of the Palmdale Water District (PWD) sediment disposal/holding site on 47th Street.

C.11.1 Visual Resource Descriptors

The consideration of visual resources and general aesthetics utilizes resource-specific quantitative and qualitative terminology. The following terms are utilized within this section to describe visual resources:

- **Viewshed:** The landscape that can be directly seen under favorable atmospheric conditions, from a particular point/area or along a transportation corridor.
  - Foreground View: 0 to 1 mile.
  - Middleground View: 1 to 3 miles.
  - Background View: 3 to 5 miles.
- **Visual Quality:** The relative value of a landscape from a visual perception point of view.
- **Visual sensitivity:** The concern by viewers with changes to visual quality. Visual sensitivity is generally higher in natural or unmodified landscapes.
- **Visual Contrast:** Opposition or unlikeness of different forms, lines, colors, or textures in a landscape. Generally, increased visual contrast within foreground distances would be more noticeable to viewers than increased visual contrast within background distances.

C.11.2 Affected Environment

The Reservoir would be closed to the public during construction of the grade control structure and annual sediment excavation/removal. Therefore, no public viewpoints would be affected on National Forest System (NFS) lands during these periods. However, the grade control structure may be partially visible to the public when the Reservoir is not temporarily closed for sediment removal (if the Reservoir water level does not cover). Therefore, the Rocky Point recreation area of the Reservoir is part of the visual study area. The viewsheds from this location were coordinated with the land use and recreation analyses.

While the Project includes haul truck travel routes within public rights-of-way (ROWs) under the jurisdiction of Los Angeles County and the City of Palmdale, due to the temporary and mobile nature of activities along these routes, visual impacts are not considered along public road ROWs for mobile construction vehicles. Sediment deposition inside existing quarries would not be visible to the public. These locations are exhausted mining pits that are below surface grade, setback from public ROWs, and surrounded by security fencing. Therefore, these locations are not included within the visual study area. However, the PWD property proposed for sediment storage/deposition would be visible from public ROWs and residences. Therefore, this site is part of the visual study area.

The visual resource analysis included a combination of information review, Forest Service consultation and methodology, field reconnaissance, seen area analysis, on-site photography, and data evaluation. Viewsheds were analyzed for their potential to display typical or worst-case visual effects of the Project

to the scenic and existing aesthetic landscape. From public observer positions, four locations were selected as viewsheds from within the Reservoir and one location was selected at the PWD disposal property for analysis within the visual study area.

C.11.2.1 Reservoir Site

The Littlerock Reservoir is a man-made feature formed by the impoundment of water by the Littlerock Dam. The Reservoir is located on Little Rock Creek in the northeastern foothills of the San Gabriel Mountains on the western edge of the Mojave Desert. Little Rock Creek, which supplies water to the reservoir, is an intermittent stream supported by annual rainfall and snowmelt, and flows north from its headwaters located on the slope of nearby Mount Williamson. Therefore, the size of the Reservoir water basin fluctuates based on yearly precipitation conditions. Photographs of the Reservoir were taken to document the visual character of the site during times the water level was below Rocky Point. Figure C.11-1 identifies the locations of the photographs, while Figure C.11-2 shows the photographs.

As shown in Figure C.11-2, Picture 1 shows views from inside the recreation area across the Reservoir (under minimum pool conditions) consist primarily of the Reservoir water surrounded by rolling hills covered in desert scrub in the middleground and background. Picture 2 shows the boat ramp, parking areas, and recreation use structures located at the edge of the basin along higher elevation peaks at the Reservoir edge. Park facilities include deciduous shade trees, picnic tables with grills, restrooms, drinking fountains, a concession stand, boat launch, and multiple paved parking lots. As shown in Photo 3, surrounding hills and the skyline are prominent foreground views across the Reservoir from park user viewsheds. Photo 4 shows the view from Rocky Point picnic area where fencing is installed within the Reservoir to restrict upstream access.

On NFS lands, the visual analysis compares visual conditions with the Scenic Integrity Objectives (SIOs) in the 2005 Angeles National Forest Land Management Plan (Forest Plan) and Scenery Management System (SMS). These methodologies are further described below in Section C.11.5. Scenic integrity is defined as the state of naturalness or, conversely, the state of disturbance created by human activities or alteration. Integrity is stated in degrees of deviation from the existing landscape character. Existing visual conditions within the Reservoir are identified below consistent with the SMS:

Visual Quality: moderate-to-high. The predominant visual elements across the Reservoir are existing small trees and scrub creating coarse visual textures, set in a horizontal plane of dirt surface, in front of hillsides mottled with low, green shrubs and tan grasses. The skyline beyond the foreground hills is a focal point, drawing the viewer's eye to the curving lines of the horizon. This park landscape exhibits a moderately high degree of intactness and coherence of form and character with substantial visual variety. However, this harmony of form and character is punctuated by the difference in dry season views and wet season (full Reservoir or minimum pool conditions) views. While the park facilities contain built features with inherent industrial character that diminish the scenic integrity of the existing landscape, these facilities and the drying of the Reservoir lead to a reduction of visual quality. Furthermore, recent tree removal along the Reservoir banks has led to an overall decline in natural landscape.

Viewer Concern: moderate. Visitors can enjoy open space, water elements, and rolling hillside views. The character of the Reservoir contrasts from a reduction in Reservoir water level, reducing the natural feel and panoramic open-space landscape. Viewers may perceive any increase in industrial character visible from the park or blockage of views as an adverse visible change.

Viewer Exposure: low. Due to recent tree removal along the Reservoir bank, there is minimal vegetative screening limiting views of the Reservoir from park visitors. The Reservoir bottom is uniform and visible when

the water level is lowered for beneficial water supply. The duration of Reservoir bottom views would be limited, based on annual water inflow and for users who would be expected to visit the park in late winter months. The number of potential viewers would be low, however, leading to a limited viewer exposure.

Overall Visual Sensitivity: low to moderate. For visitors to the area, the moderate visual quality, moderate viewer concern, and low viewer exposure lead to a low to moderate overall visual sensitivity of the visual setting and viewing characteristics.

C.11.2.2 Palmdale Water District Site

As discussed in Section B.2.3.2, a 21-acre site owned by PWD and located within unincorporated Los Angeles County would be used for sediment storage, allowing for future use (recycling) of removed sediment material. Photos of this site were taken from a public viewpoint at the California Aqueduct. The locations of these photographs are shown on Figure C.11-3, with the photos documenting existing visual conditions shown on Figure C.11-4.

As shown in Photos 1 through 4, the predominant visual elements across the PWD site are horizontal plane views of a desert floor showing existing Joshua Trees and desert scrub intermixed within the dirt surface in the foreground, rooftops and cityscape features with a steady tree greenbelt in the middleground, and distant mountains in the background. Views of an elevated dirt pad, vehicle access, and winding natural dirt paths create a focal point in the foreground throughout the site from 47th Street, accentuating that the site is not totally undisturbed. Adjacent to the site are the aqueduct, water storage facilities, residences, and 47th Street, which all contribute to a somewhat urbanized character that diminish the scenic integrity of the existing landscape. Furthermore, unauthorized trash dumping within the site has led to an overall decline in visual quality. While non-passive recreationists were observed from this location at the aqueduct, the viewshed primarily provides low sensitivity with the focal point on the overall background views of Palmdale and the desert floor.

C.11.3 Regulatory Framework

The following discussion summarizes the associated laws, regulations, and standards for the jurisdictions traversed by the Project. Table C.11-1 provides a list of plans and policies that are applicable to visual resources, and includes a discussion of the Project's consistency with each plan or policy.

C.11.3.1 Federal

The Reservoir is located on NFS lands. Section C.9 (Recreation and Land Use) contains an evaluation of policies within the Forest Service Land Management Plan that are applicable to visual resources.

C.11.3.2 State

There are no applicable statewide plans or policies pertaining to the regulation or analysis of visual resource impacts. Each jurisdiction's General Plan regulates designated State Scenic Highways, as discussed under local plans and policies below.

C.11.3.3 Local

- **County of Los Angeles General Plan.** The Los Angeles County General Plan is the foundational document for all community-based plans that serve the unincorporated areas. Both the approved General Plan (1974) and public review draft of the 2035 General Plan (2014) were reviewed for noise goals and policies applicable to the Project (County of Los Angeles 1974a and 2014). The General

Plans do not identify any haul truck travel routes as being a designated scenic road or highway (County of Los Angeles 1974b and 2014). The following applicant General Plan policies related to visual resources were identified:

- **Approved General Plan, Conservation and Open Space Element, Policy 16:** Protect the visual quality of scenic areas including ridgelines and scenic views from public roads, trails, and key vantage points.
- **2035 Draft General Plan, VII Scenic Resources, Policy C/NR 13.4:** Encourage developments to be designed to create a consistent visual relationship with the natural terrain and vegetation.
- **2035 Draft General Plan, VII Scenic Resources, Policy C/NR 13.5:** Encourage required grading to be compatible with the existing terrain.

City of Palmdale General Plan. Review of the City of Palmdale General Plan Environmental Resources Element identifies both Barrel Springs Road and Pearblossom Highway as designated scenic highways (City of Palmdale, 1994). However, because the Project does not include any development (beyond temporary haul truck trips) along these scenic highways, no policies related to scenic highways were found applicable.

Table C.11-1. Consistency with Applicable Visual Resource Plans and Policies

Plan/Policy	Consistency	Explanation
Approved Los Angeles County General Plan		
Conservation and Open Space Element, Policy 16: Protect the visual quality of scenic areas including ridgelines and scenic views from public roads, trails, and key vantage points.	Yes	The visual contrast of temporary sediment storage would be limited to the appearance of expanding the existing at-grade cleared surface on 47th Street northward. Sediment would be only temporarily stored within depressions on the northeastern portion of the site in a manner to not extend above existing grade of 47th Street. Therefore, the temporary storage of sediment within the PWD site located in unincorporated Los Angeles County would not significantly alter existing form, line, color, or texture of the site landscape or character.
Draft Los Angeles County 2035 General Plan		
VII Scenic Resources, Policy C/NR 13.4: Encourage developments to be designed to create a consistent visual relationship with the natural terrain and vegetation.	Yes	The visual contrast of temporary sediment storage would be limited to the appearance of expanding the existing at-grade cleared surface on 47th Street northward. The color of stored sediment would be similar or identical to the existing site surface. While some vegetation would be removed and not replanted within the actual sediment storage area, this activity would not significantly alter existing form, line, color, or texture of the site landscape or character.
VII Scenic Resources, Policy C/NR 13.5: Encourage required grading to be compatible with the existing terrain.	Yes	Sediment would be only temporarily stored on the PWD site within depressions on the northeastern portion of the site in a manner to not extend above existing grade of 47th Street.

Source: Los Angeles County, 1974; Los Angeles County, 2014

C.11.4 Issues Identified During Scoping

There were no visual resource issues identified during the public scoping period. See Appendix E (Scoping Summary Report) for a summary of issues relevant to the entire Project that were raised during the scoping process.

C.11.5 Environmental Consequences

Significance Criteria. The following significance criteria for visual resources were derived from the Forest Service Scenic Management System and by considering potential aesthetic impacts occurring at the proposed sediment disposal locations (not on NFS lands). Impacts of the Project or alternatives would be considered significant and would require mitigation if:

- Criterion VIS1: Have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista, or substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of the affected area.
- Criterion VIS2: Conflict with adopted city, county, State, or federal plans, policies, regulations, or standards applicable to the protection of visual resources.

Impact Assessment Methodology. The Forest Service Scenery Management System (SMS) is intended to attain the highest possible quality of landscape aesthetics and scenery commensurate with other appropriate public uses, costs, and benefits (USFS, 2014). In 2005, the Forest Service implemented the SMS by adopting Scenic Integrity Objectives (SIOs) for its lands in the Forest Plan. The purpose of the SMS is to methodically inventory, manage and monitor aesthetic and scenic resources on NFS lands. In the Angeles National Forest (ANF), the visual resource analysis uses this Forest Service methodology to evaluate Project activities within NSF lands and its effects on landscape aesthetics. The Project was analyzed using the SMS to ascertain compliance with the Land Management Plan. These guidelines are identified in Table C.11-2.

Table C.11-2. General Guidance for Review of Visual Impact Significance Under Forest Service SMS

Visual Sensitivity	Visual Change				
	Low	Low to Moderate	Moderate	Moderate to High	High
Low	Not Significant[1]	Not Significant	Adverse but Not Significant[2]	Adverse but Not Significant	Adverse but Not Significant
Low to Moderate	Not Significant	Adverse but Not Significant	Adverse but Not Significant	Adverse but Not Significant	Adverse and Potentially Significant[3]
Moderate	Adverse but Not Significant[2]	Adverse but Not Significant	Adverse but Not Significant	Adverse and Potentially Significant	Adverse and Potentially Significant
Moderate to High	Adverse but Not Significant	Adverse but Not Significant	Adverse and Potentially Significant	Adverse and Potentially Significant	Significant[4]
High	Adverse but Not Significant	Adverse and Potentially Significant[3]	Adverse and Potentially Significant	Significant[4]	Significant

1 - Not Significant – Impacts may or may not be perceptible but are considered minor in the context of existing landscape characteristics and view opportunity.
2 - Adverse but Not Significant – Impacts are perceived as negative but do not exceed environmental thresholds.
3 - Adverse and Potentially Significant – Impacts are perceived as negative and may exceed environmental thresholds depending on project and site-specific circumstances.
4 - Significant – Impacts with feasible mitigation may be reduced to levels that are not significant or avoided all together. Without mitigation, significant impacts would exceed environmental thresholds.

An adverse visual impact occurs when: (1) a proposed action perceptibly changes existing or desired features of the physical environment so that they no longer appear to be fitting in the characteristic landscape; or (2) a proposed action introduces new features in the physical environment that are perceptibly uncharacteristic of, and discordant with, the subject landscape. Changes that seem uncharacteristic are those that appear out of place, discordant, or distracting, and do not repeat form, line, color, texture, pattern, or scale common to the valued landscape character being viewed. The degree of the visual impact depends upon how noticeable the adverse change may be, that is, the magnitude and extent of deviations from the existing visual conditions, or deviations from the Forest Service SIOs at the Reservoir. The noticeability of a visual impact is a function of the visual characteristics of Project features, as compared to existing visual conditions, degree of visual contrast, and viewing conditions (distance, duration of view, angle of view, public access to viewshed, etc.).

C.11.5.1 Proposed Action/Project

Direct and Indirect Effects Analysis

Have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista, or substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of the site and its surroundings (Criterion VIS1)

Activities at the Reservoir within the ANF include construction of the grade control structure, annual sediment removal, and annual restoration/maintenance activities. Because the Reservoir would be closed to the public during these activity periods, visual impacts within the ANF would be limited to times when these activities are completed. Additionally, sediment disposal within quarry disposal locations would not be visible to the public. This is because the quarry properties are large disturbed areas, setback from public viewsheds. Furthermore, sediment would be disposed within exhausted pits, which are large depressions below existing grade. Therefore, the analysis below for Impact V-1 is focused on Project-related visual changes at the Reservoir when open to the public and from activities occurring at the PWD sediment staging location visible from public vantage points within unincorporated Los Angeles County and the City of Palmdale.

Impact V-1: Project implementation would have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista, or substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of a location and its surroundings

Littlerock Reservoir. Because the Reservoir would be closed to the public during annual Project activity periods, visitors would view changes to the Reservoir landscape only before or after these activity periods. Furthermore, as the Reservoir would typically be submerged by water during times open to the public, Project-related visual changes would be greatest during dry season conditions.

Views of the grade control structure would be most prominent from the Rocky Point picnic area. Because this location is also the upper extent of the Reservoir, it would be last submerged by seasonal water inflow and impoundment. Figure C.11-5 shows existing visual conditions of this location and a visual simulation with the grade control structure in place, under dry conditions. As shown, the grade control structure would be flush with or slightly above the Reservoir bottom, and would not result in a structure with a height that could obstruct views across the Reservoir or block background views of surrounding hillsides.

While the grade control structure would cause a slight increase in the prominence of non-natural features and industrial character, the visual contrast compared to existing conditions would be minimal and would not substantially alter the existing landscape. Because the grade control structure is a soil cement structure utilizing excavated sediment, the color would be similar to existing Reservoir sedi-

ment. As shown in Figure C.11-5, under existing conditions, temporary orange fencing is in place at Rocky Point to prohibit upstream activity into Arroyo Toad habitat. While not shown in the visual simulation, similar restriction fencing would likely continue to be in place after construction of the grade control structure. This would reduce visual contrast of the structure.

The greatest visual contrast of the grade control structure would come from soil cement bank protection, which would occur only up to 9 feet above the Reservoir bed extending downstream 40 feet from Rocky Point (refer to Figure C.11-5). While this bank stabilization would introduce industrial contrast, it would mimic the color and shape of the existing Reservoir bank. Therefore, the visual change of the grade control structure and bank protection is considered low and would not significantly alter existing form, line, color, or texture of the Reservoir landscape or character.

Under dry conditions, grading and sediment excavation/removal would also result in visual changes to the Reservoir floor topography. Visible changes would be limited to periods when the Reservoir water level is low. The removal of sediment would simply lower the Reservoir bottom when compared to existing conditions and would not change surface appearance, color, or substantially alter the visual character of the Reservoir. When water storage design capacity of the Reservoir is restored, the Reservoir bottom would be approximately 20 feet lower nearest the Dam and taper to existing grade near Rocky Point. The deepest excavation, nearest the Dam, would be first covered by water impoundment. Therefore, sediment removal would not significantly alter existing form, line, color, or texture of the Reservoir landscape or character.

When compared to the General Guidance for Review of Visual Impact Significance Under Forest Service SMS presented in Table C.11-2, visual impacts of Project activities within the Reservoir and ANF are considered adverse but not significant. Therefore, the Project would not adversely affect this scenic area or substantially degrade the existing visual character of the Reservoir.

PWD Sediment Storage Site. Temporary visual impacts would result from the presence of equipment and sediment stored within this site. Permanent visual changes would also result from the minor alteration of landform and removal of vegetation within the northeast portion of this site (where sediment would be temporarily stored for later reuse). As discussed in Section B.2.3.2, sediment would be stored at this location only for the short term. As shown in Figure C.11-4, the PWD site contains an existing area of disturbance providing an at-grade vehicle access pad on 47th Street (refer to Figure C.11-3 and C.11-4, photo 4). The amount of excavated sediment stored north of this disturbance area would likely vary from year to year, but would be stored in a manner to not extend above the existing grade of 47th Street.

Vehicles, equipment, workers, and stockpiled sediment would be temporarily visible, primarily limited to motorists travelling on 47th Street and residences west of the site (approximately 1,100 feet west of the storage location). Once the sediment storage location is cleared, all staging, vehicle parking, and material storage activities would occur in previously disturbed areas. View contrast from temporary use of equipment would not result in a permanent change to existing views of the site. Ground-disturbing activity, primarily clearing the sediment storage area, has the potential to partially disturb natural vegetative patterns of the site's visual landscape. However, although emergent riparian vegetation is present in isolated areas of the site (refer to Figure C.11-4), the visual focus of the site remains desert sand tone with scattered vegetation. The color of sediment would be similar to that of the site surface under existing conditions. Therefore, the visual contrast of temporary sediment storage would create the appearance of expanding the existing at-grade cleared surface on 47th Street northward (refer to Figure C.11-4, photo 4). This visual change of the site is not considered to significantly alter existing form, line, color, or texture of the site landscape or character.

CEQA Significance Conclusion

The grade control structure bank protection would introduce a new industrial character to views from Rocky Point. Furthermore, temporary sediment storage and activities within the PWD site would expand the existing disturbed and un-vegetated portion of the site north along 47th Street. However, these changes would not significantly alter the existing visual landscape of the sites, as the overall composition of viewsheds at these locations would be largely unaltered. While Project activities would result in some visual contrast over existing conditions, the magnitude of visual change is considered less than significant (Class III).

Conflict with adopted city, county, State, or federal plans, policies, regulations, or standards applicable to the protection of visual resources (Criterion VIS2)

Impact V-2: Project implementation would conflict with applicable plans, policies, regulations, or standards for the protection of visual resources

Scenic Integrity Objectives on NFS Lands. As the Reservoir is located within NFS lands, the key factors considered in determining the degree of visual impact are compliance and consistency with the SIOs. The Forest Service SMS uses Desired Landscape Character (DLC) and SIOs to evaluate, manage, and monitor landscape aesthetics and scenery. DLC expresses the highest quality goal for a given landscape. The DLC represents the sustainable image pursued by the Forest Service for each landscape place. SIO represents the minimum acceptable visual quality that is achieved by the maximum level of acceptable change.

In order to define the degrees of deviation from the natural landscape character that may occur at any given time, the Forest Service uses SIOs to represent the minimum levels of scenic integrity to which landscapes are to be managed. All land management activities, including the Project, must ensure that these minimum levels are achieved. This level of scenic integrity is to be used for inventory purposes only, and is never used as a management objective. This level of scenic integrity is useful for inventorying existing visual conditions or for predicting future scenic conditions of proposed projects.

Littlerock Reservoir is located in the Mojave Front Country Place, which has a designated High SIO. Under the Forest Service SMS, High SIOs are defined as landscapes where the valued landscape character “appears” intact. Visual deviations (human-made structures) may be present but must repeat the form, line, color, texture, and pattern common to the landscape character so completely and at such a scale that they are not evident. Human-caused deviations may be present but must repeat the form, line, color, texture, and pattern common to the natural landscape character so completely and at such a scale that they are not evident.

Changes to the Reservoir bottom as a result of sediment removal would be visible only for brief periods until the Reservoir is refilled with water. Because the Project would change only the low form topography of the Reservoir bottom and of the same color/form, sediment removal is not considered to result in an adverse change to existing views and sensitivity at the Reservoir.

As discussed in detail under Impact V-1, the visual change of the grade control structure and bank protection is considered low and would not significantly alter existing form, line, color, or texture of the Reservoir landscape or character. The grade control structure would be flush with the topography and only visible during dry conditions. Bank protection at Rocky Point would result in minimal industrial character as the color and shape would mimic existing bank conditions. When compared to the General Guidance for Review of Visual Impact Significance Under Forest Service SMS presented in Table C.11-2, the impact is considered adverse but not significant. Therefore, the Project would not alter the

definition of High SIO for the Reservoir, and would be consistent with the SIO of the NFS as outlined in the 2005 Forest Service Land Management Plan.

Los Angeles County General Plan. Policies within the General Plan seek to protect visual quality of scenic areas, including ridgelines and scenic views from public roads, trails, and key vantage points. They also encourage developments to be designed to create a consistent visual relationship with the natural terrain and vegetation. As discussed in detail within Impact V-1, the visual contrast of temporary sediment storage would be limited to expanding the appearance of an existing at-grade disturbed area on 47th Street northward. As discussed in Section B.2.3.2, sediment would be stored within depressions on the northeastern portion of the site in a manner to not extend above existing grade of 47th Street. Therefore, the temporary storage of sediment within this site would not significantly alter existing form, line, color, or texture of the site landscape or character. The Project would be consistent with applicable policies of the Los Angeles County General Plan pertaining to visual quality of the PWD site.

City of Palmdale General Plan. Review of the City of Palmdale General Plan Environmental Resources Element identifies both Barrel Springs Road and Pearblossom Highway as designated scenic highways (City of Palmdale, 1994). However, because the Project does not include any development (beyond temporary haul truck trips) along these scenic highways, no policies related to the management or quality of scenic highways were found applicable.

CEQA Significance Conclusion

The Project is found consistent with visual management policies of the 2005 Forest Service Land Management Plan, Los Angeles County General Plan, and the City of Palmdale General Plan. Less-than-significant impacts would occur with respect to compliance with applicable visual related plans and policies (Class III).

C.11.5.2 Alternative 1: Reduced Sediment Removal Intensity Alternative

Direct and Indirect Effects Analysis

Have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista, or substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of the site and its surroundings (Criterion VIS1)

Alternative 1 results in identical activities as the Project, but would instead start the sediment removal period on July 1 (annually), instead of after Labor Day, until water storage design capacity of the Reservoir is restored. Visual impacts from the grade control structure, bank protection at Rocky Point, and annual sediment removal would be identical for Alternative 1 as those described for the Project. Therefore, the grade control structure and bank protection, as well as temporary storage of sediment within the PWD site, would not significantly alter existing form, line, color, or texture of the Reservoir and PWD site landscape or character. The Project would not adversely affect any scenic area or substantially degrade the existing visual character of these locations.

CEQA Significance Conclusion

While Alternative 1 activities would result in some visual contrast over existing conditions, the magnitude of visual change is considered less than significant (Class III).

Conflict with adopted city, county, State, or federal plans, policies, regulations, or standards applicable to the protection of visual resources (Criterion VIS2)

As discussed above for Criterion VIS1, visual impacts from Alternative 1 would be the same as those described for the Project. Alternative 1 would not substantially alter existing form, line, color, or texture

of the characteristic landscape of the Reservoir. When compared to the General Guidance for Review of Visual Impact Significance Under Forest Service SMS presented in Table C.11-2, the impact is considered adverse but not significant. Therefore, Alternative 1 would not alter the definition of High SIO for the Reservoir, and would be consistent with the SIO of the NFS as outlined in the 2005 Forest Service Land Management Plan. Furthermore, the temporary storage of sediment within the PWD site would be consistent with applicable policies of the Los Angeles County General Plan pertaining to visual quality of the PWD site.

CEQA Significance Conclusion

Alternative 1 is found consistent with visual management policies of the 2005 Forest Service Land Management Plan, Los Angeles County General Plan, and the City of Palmdale General Plan. Less-than-significant impacts would occur with respect to compliance with applicable visual related plans and policies (Class III).

C.11.5.3 Alternative 2: No Action/No Project Alternative

Direct and Indirect Effects Analysis

Under the No Action/No Project Alternative, sediment removal activities would not occur and sediment would continue to accumulate behind Littlerock Dam and within the Reservoir at an annual average rate of 38,000 cubic yards per year. PWD would not undertake any activities to remove sediment. At full capacity, sediment accumulated behind the dam would be approximately 7.4 million cubic yards.

While 7.4 million cubic yards of sediment would accumulate within the Reservoir, demolition of the Dam is estimated to only require a one-acre staging area downstream of the Dam and require the removal of approximately 2.8 million cubic yards of sediment and dam concrete. Such activities would result in a project similar to, but larger than, the Project. Upon completion of the extensive construction period necessary under this scenario, it is assumed the Reservoir would be restored to natural conditions. Thus, no water impoundment would occur and Little Rock Creek would free flow through the ANF. This scenario could also include the removal of some or all existing recreational facilities and access roads. It is assumed that absent the Reservoir, current recreation facilities would be removed or altered. A determination of visual compliance with the SIO of the NFS as outlined in the 2005 Forest Service Land Management Plan would be speculative for such a scenario under the No Action/No Project Alternative. This is primarily because a different Land Management Plan would be in place at that time. It is unknown what the SIO of the Reservoir location would be at the time. Because this scenario is assumed to include full restoration of the Reservoir to natural conditions allowing flow of the Little Rock Creek waterway, unknown but not adverse visual impacts would be expected.

In the event the Reservoir became filled with sediment and the Dam was left in place, visual quality of the Reservoir would be similar to existing conditions with the exception of no water impoundment. However, the visible build-up of sediment behind the dam may appear extrinsic and eliminate existing views of the Reservoir banks. Without water impoundment, Little Rock Creek would free flow through the ANF and cascade over the existing dam. A stream channel would likely develop within the central portion of the Reservoir. This scenario would likely require some sort of downstream flood-control channel or protection to be constructed. Depending on the location of such flood control facilities, these could result in visual contrast and adverse visual impacts.

A determination of visual compliance with the SIO of the NFS as outlined in the 2005 Forest Service Land Management Plan would be speculative for either scenario under the No Action/No Project Alternative. This is primarily because a different Land Management Plan would be in place at that time. It is

unknown what the SIO of the Reservoir location would be at the time. Furthermore, unknown necessary infrastructure, like new flood control facilities, may be required and not in compliance with the Forest Service Land Management Plan or Los Angeles County plans/policies applicable at the time

CEQA Significance Conclusion

A determination of visual impacts under the No Action/No Project Alternative is somewhat speculative and several scenarios are possible. Regardless of the scenario, it is assumed water would eventually not impound and Little Rock Creek would free flow through the ANF. Under this Alternative, natural conditions at the Reservoir and Little Rock Creek are assumed to eventually be restored. Such an event would result in visual change, but not significant visual contrast as the Reservoir already contains a natural character. Therefore, visual quality impacts of the No Action/No Project Alternative are considered less than significant (Class III).

C.11.6 Impact Summary

Table C.11-3 summarizes the direct and indirect environmental impacts of the proposed action and the alternatives on visual resources. Refer to Section C.11.5 for a complete discussion of the environmental analysis.

Table C.11-3. Summary of Impacts and Mitigation Measures – Visual Resources

Impact	Impact Significance				Mitigation Measures/SPC
	Proposed Action	Alt. 1	Alt. 2: No Action	NFS Lands[1]	
V-1: Project implementation would have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista, or substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of a location and its surroundings	Class III	Class III	Class III	Yes	None
V-2: Project implementation would conflict with applicable plans, policies, regulations, or standards for the protection of visual resources	Class III	Class III	Class III	Yes	None

Notes:
1 - Indicates whether this impact is applicable to National Forest System lands.